



Council's Activities Grow Wisconsin's Ag Workforce

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MADISON – Corey Kuchta of Coleman had recently been promoted to an Agriculture Market Leader at Wisconsin Public Service when he heard about an opportunity to develop his leadership skills by enrolling in a new course, the Wisconsin Agribusiness Academy.

“The Wisconsin Agribusiness Academy gave me the tools to be a better leader to benefit my career and my company,” said Kuchta. “The opportunity to learn from agricultural industry professionals from across the state and network with other young leaders was very beneficial.”

The Wisconsin Agribusiness Academy was one of many activities planned by the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection's Wisconsin Agricultural Education & Workforce Development Council this year to attract, develop, and retain the state's agricultural workforce.

The Council was created by Wisconsin Act 223, enacted in 2008, to support research on agricultural employment and educational needs, recommend policies and initiatives, encourage youth to pursue related careers, facilitate public and private partnerships, recruit qualified workers, and offer professional development. The Council received a grant from the Workforce Development Board of South Central Wisconsin to execute the Wisconsin Agribusiness Academy and seven other educational programs.

The Wisconsin Agribusiness Academy, coordinated by the University of Wisconsin-Extension, included four sessions, covering topics from business planning to conflict management. Participants completed pre-session assignments, learned from industry and government leaders, and participated in discussions.

Other courses funded by the grant this past year included: Meat Processing Boot Camp, Future Fields, Introduction to Dairy Processing, Orientation to Agriculture Careers, Dairy Processing HACCP, Food Processing HACCP, and a Landscape Technician Training. Over 230 people participated in the training sessions.

“I encourage anyone looking to be a better individual, employee, leader, or mentor to take advantage of one of these courses,” concluded Kuchta. “These classes make you a more confident leader who can be more effective for your company and move you farther along in your career.”

The Council outlined the success of these training sessions and other activities from the year in their 2011 Annual Report available online. Another accomplishment includes the development of WhyAg.com, a website to raise the understanding and awareness of agriculture, food, and natural resources industry career opportunities. The Council also is supporting the work of the state's ag educators and school guidance counselors by developing resources and creating educational plans.

Agriculture contributes 353,991 jobs to the Wisconsin economy or 10-percent of the total employment. These jobs include on-farm production, processing, horticulture, forestry and logging, and more.

To view the Annual Report, visit datep.wi.gov/uploads/About/pdf/WAEWDC2011AnnualReport.pdf. For more information on the Council, contact Executive Director, Jack Ourada, at 608-235-7148 or johnp.ourada@wisconsin.gov.



Corey Kuchta of Wisconsin Public Service completed the Wisconsin Agribusiness Academy, planned by the Wisconsin Agricultural Education & Workforce Development Council this year. The success of this course and other activities are highlighted in the Council's Final Report available online. (Submitted Photo)